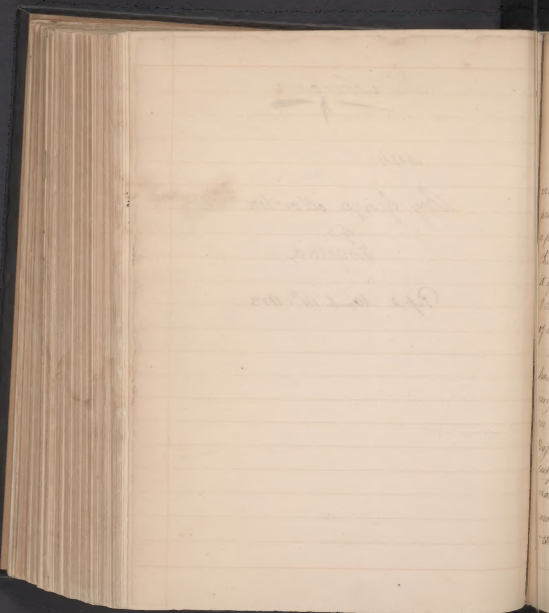


On Tobacco

1754

By George Elberton
of
Virginia

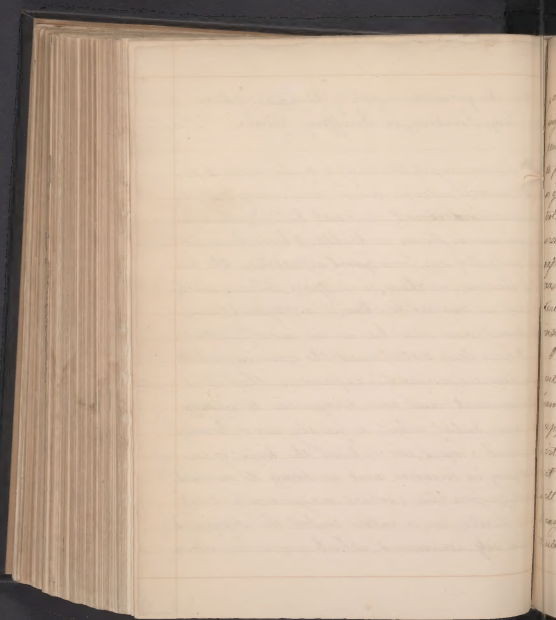
Printed March 14th. 1823



On the pernicious effects of the habit of chew-
ing, Smoking, or Snuffing Tobacco.

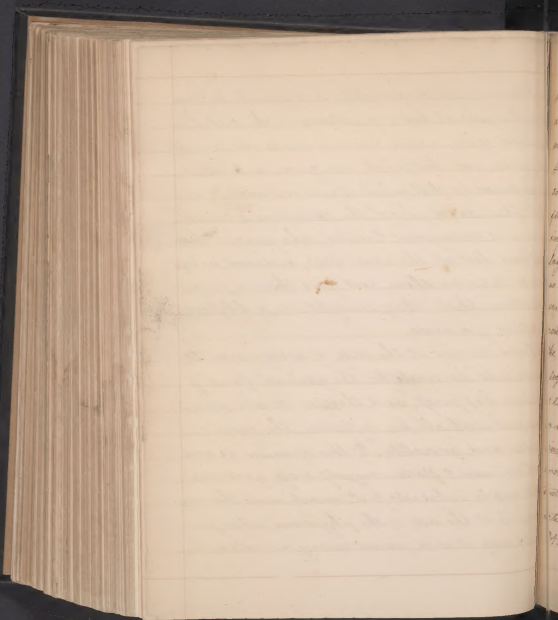
Concerning it the duty of a physician to pre-
vent as well as cure disease, and consequently to
prevent and correct immoral habits, (which have
a pernicious influence on health) I have chosen, as
the subject of my inaugural dissertation the hab-
it of chewing, smoking, or snuffing tobacco, which
I shall endeavour to show, is a frequent cause
of disease, and also has an immoral tendency.

I have long entertained the opinion (which
has been confirmed by experience) that it is
imprudent, and even dangerous to indulge
in any habit, which is purely one of luxury.
By such a course, we contract the habit of in-
dulging in luxuries, and yielding to our nat-
ural propensities (which are generally evil)
and thereby lose, or rather neglect the attainment
of that self-command, which is of so much im-



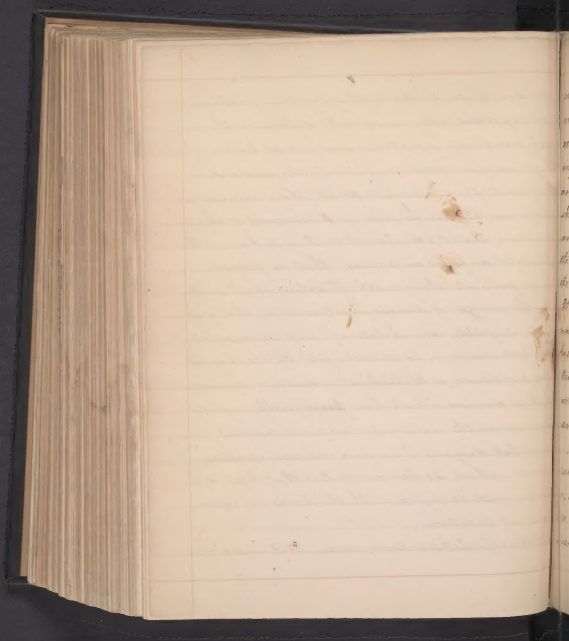
placance as regards morality and health. By forming this general habit of yielding to the evil propensities of our nature, reason is made subservient to passion, and that which was given us to govern, is governed by that which it was intended to control. Thus do we pervert the intentions of our all-wise and munificent Creator, who gave us strong passions, but at the same time, endowed us with reason to govern them, and give them a proper direction, that they might be a blessing, instead of a curse.

I also conceive it the duty of every man to contribute his mite to the general fund of human happiness, and therefore to aid and support with all his influence, the cause of virtue and morality. If this opinion be a correct one, and I flatter myself every good man will readily subscribe to it, much more than my I say, is it the duty of the physician, whose particular duty it is to prevent disease as well as re-



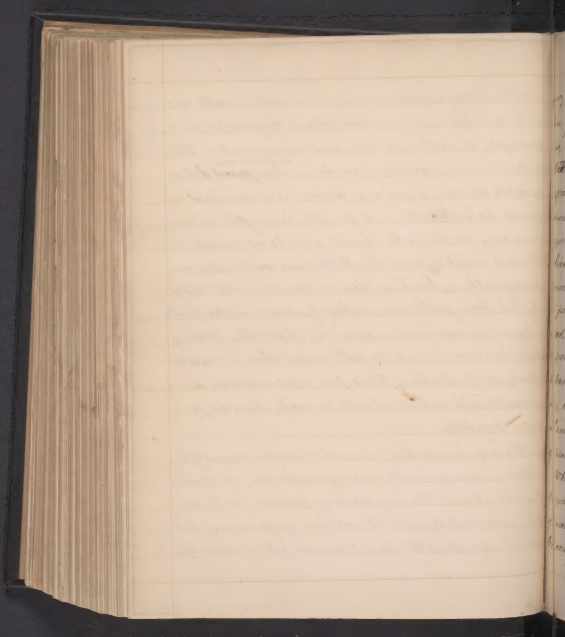
their health, for in the discharge of this particular and important duty, much will depend on the general prevalence of virtuous and moral habits. Sure no man of common observation, and experience, will, for a moment, doubt their salutary influence on health. So fully am I convinced of this influence, that I am almost willing to hazard, the laying it down as an axiom, that, in proportion as we promote the growth of virtue, shall we lessen the ravages of disease. Certain it is, that if we could completely annihilate vice and immorality, the shock would be so severely felt by the long catalogue of disease, as to hurl out of existence, many of those diseases, which have ~~been~~ justly inflicted on man as the well merited punishment for sins that disgrace him as a rational creature, and for which he deserves to lose that high distinction, and be classed with the brute, or irrational creation.

It therefore behoves every man, but more espe-



cially, every member of the medical faculty, to ex-
ercise all his influence, and strive by precept, and
example, to deter from vice, and ~~excess~~ ^{excess} ~~wisdom~~. The
importance of forming early in life, ^{virtuous and} ~~moral~~ habits,
and the danger of forming vicious and immoral ones
should be earnestly, and forcibly impressed on the
unwary youth, who should also be apprised of
the ease with which the latter are contracted, and
the difficulty of breaking them when once established.
It has been justly remarked by some writer (whose
name I do not now remember) that "the fetters of
habit are too light to be felt, until they become too
strong to be broken." These few words contain an im-
portant truth, which should be early learned, and
never forgotten.

Having made these general remarks on one of the
duties of man generally, and physicians particu-
larly, and also on the importance of forming early in
life good habits, and the danger of forming bad
ones in which latter class I include all habits of dis-



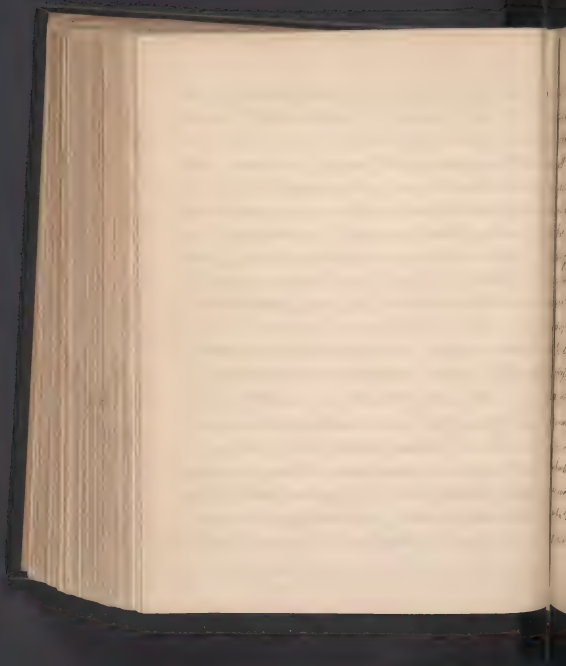
3) "I shall proceed to the more particular consideration
of the important consequences of the habit of chewing
and smoking or snuffing tobacco.

Two habits are more common than these, and
are found to increase when once confirmed. Though
initially disagreeable at first, yet when once we have
acquired a taste for it, there is no luxury, with
which we would not as soon part as this sort of
narcotic though now so universal among us. Every where
it passes are felt, and its fixations act most
powerfully. Like opium it calms the agitations of our
imperial frame, and soothes the anxieties and dis-
turbances of the mind. But, like most articles of lux-
ury, it is seldom used with moderation, and
when carried to excess, becomes a frequent cause
of disease, and should therefore be discontinued.

When chewed or smoked to excess, tobacco ex-
erts a violent action on the system, and the low, brain
becomes consequent on an impaired digestion.
It may produce this effect on several occasions.



By depressing the food, or a large portion of the saliv-
ary which was intended to be taken with it into the
stomach and is very essential to its proper diges-
tion. 2^d By impairing the quantity of the salivary. Being
an active stimulus and acting directly on the sali-
vary glands it excites them to an immoderate ac-
tion causing them to secrete a much greater quan-
tity of fluid, than was required of them by nature
and I think it may be laid down as a general
rule, to which there are few if any exceptions,
that if by any unnatural stimulus, any fluid
secreting organ is made to secrete a greater
quantity of fluid than it was intended by na-
ture should be secreted, when in a healthy state,
the quality of that secretion will be ^{be} impaired in pro-
portion to the increase. Nature made certain or-
gans to perform certain offices, allowing to each
certain length of time, to perform well its own
particular duties. Now if by the interference of
art, that time be shortened, or, which is in ef-



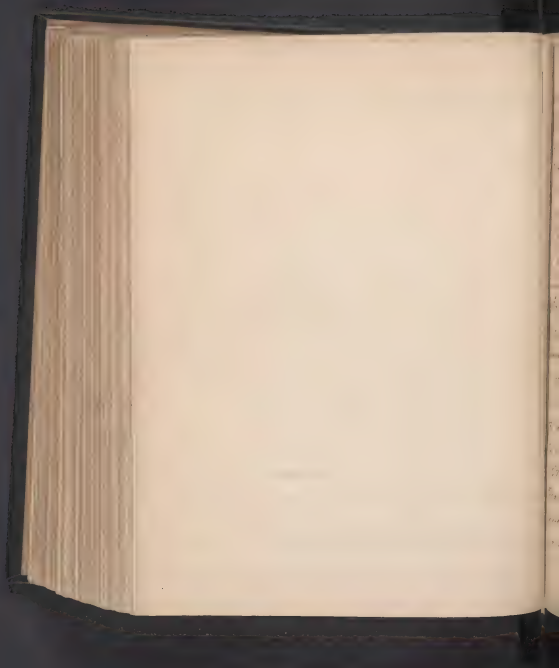
for the same, the labour to be done in said
time be much increased, can it be reasonably
expected, that this labour so much increased
will be as well executed, as if more time had
been allowed to its completion? I think it
cannot. If I be correct in this, may I not conclude,
that tobacco, when chewed, or smoked, impairs
the quality of the saliva by causing the saliva
glands to secrete, in a given time, a much
greater quantity of saliva, than nature requires
of them?

If then it be admitted, that the saliva, of this
descript, contains peculiar qualities, is necessary
to proper digestion, (which I believe is now denied
of meat) and also that the quantity must be
proportioned to the demand made by the food,
which demand will be regulated by its quality,
as well as quantity, It follows necessarily, that
whatever impairs the quality of this fluid, and
press the food as a part of its demand, will in-



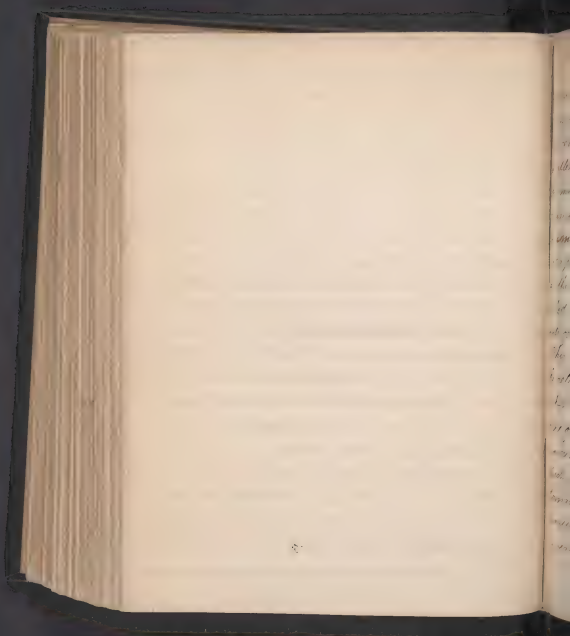
usually, prevent its proper and complete digestion.
We have shown above that tobacco when chewed or
smoked, produce each of these effects, consequently,
when thus used, it prevents proper digestion. What
is incapable of rendering perfect the digestive
power, will, if continued, continue, or rather increase
that defect, until at length it becomes a disease call-
ed dyspepsia, troublesome and distressing in its
consequences, and tedious and difficult in its
cure. It therefore follows, that the habit of chew-
ing or smoking tobacco, which is a very prevalent
one, frequently produces dyspepsia, by depriving the
stomach of its full portion of saliva, and also, in-
juring the quality of that fluid.

Tobacco when chewed to excite warm liquors pro-
duces this disease, by either its direct, or indirect ac-
tion on the stomach. By every ~~chewer~~ ^{chewer} of tobacco,
more or less of its juice, which is expected by mas-
tication to be unavoidably swallowed and then
acts on the stomach. That this organ is not



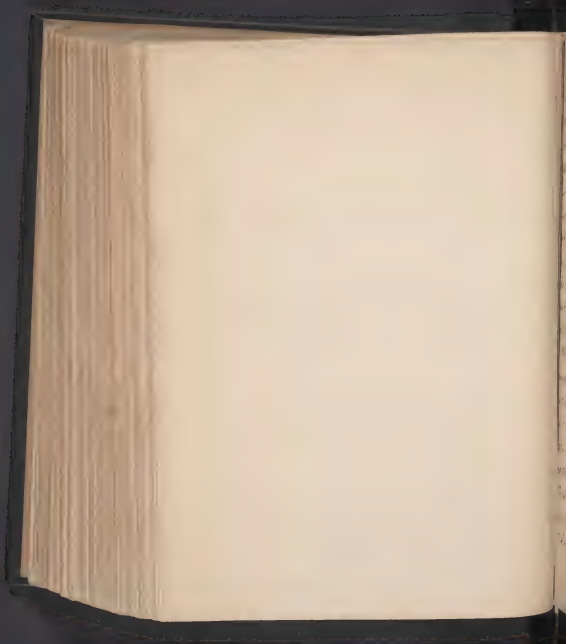
sensibility to its action is evident from the ter-
rible and even fatal consequences that have en-
sued from a small portion of it having been swal-
lowed. It is also known as one of the most active
emetics. As a general rule, any strong, and
irritating, frequently applied, or long continu-
ed to the stomach, will increase its tone, and there-
by weaken its digestive powers. This is well estab-
lished by reason, observation, and experience. And
that tobacco is a strong and active stimulant in
general, applies to the stomach & tobacco-chews
have been applied with and with out success
to increase the power of the stomach. Hence the
conclusion, that when chewed to excess it impairs
the tone of the stomach, and consequently digestion
but direct action on that organ.

It also produces a similar effect on the lungs.
That there is a sympathetic con-
nection between the stomach, and the tongue,
pancreas, & thyroid gland, may easily be a well known



... is produced by simply chewing a small
of certain aromatic substances, which will
be attested by all who have made the experiment.
The most disgusting, or trifling, apprehensions, sometimes
of an alarming degree, have been occasioned by mere
smelling, or chewing, this aromatic drug, though
the particle of it was received into the stomach. The
effect is satisfactorily explained unless it be
that the well known laws of sympathy? What
is the other rational explanation.

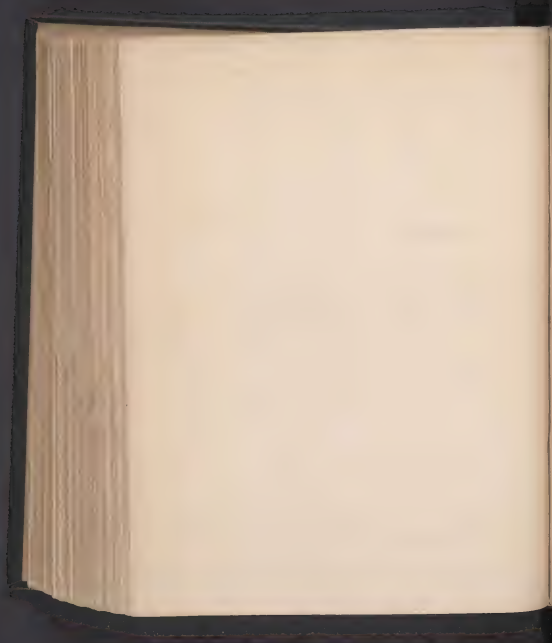
The sympathetic connection, is also obvious in
the relief which is often experienced in cases of
indigestion, from merely chewing or smelling
one of the comminutions, aromatic, &c. It is not
received in the foul tongue and sent thereat
but is often symptomatic of a disordered
stomach. But who, consume these unne-
cessary, or poisoning, that which is now ex-
perimentally acknowledged?



The experiments established, it follows as a necessary consequence, that tobacco when chewed, acting directly and indirectly on the tongue fauces &c, may act on the stomach as a pathetic, and thus is enabled to exert its indirect action on this organ and eventually surpass its tone, according to the general rule mentioned above. From this and other facts, particularly and it follows, that the habit of chewing tobacco to wit, more, and without effect, does produce dyspepsia by its indirect, as well as direct action on the stomach.

The above remarks are applicable to the habit of smoking though not with equal force. The smoke acts both directly and indirectly on the stomach but not tobacco so it so enters a stimulus as the above in medicinal quantities, I suppose it is, though similar, yet not so great.

That tobacco when chewed or smoked more, has an effect on the stomach, and also on the intestines, have I seen the proof of this producing such



most ^{im}mediate disposition to go to stool, thus a less
very prompt, as a mild cathartic. I am well ac-
quainted with a young gentleman of undoubted
purity, who has frequently told me, he seldom
smokes a cigar, that it does not almost
immediately, act in this way on him, and that
when, either by generalis, resort to this pleas-
ant remedy, which induces him to have a
good effect. I have myself seen him, and
the effect on him, having to him, immediately
he is obliged to absent himself
from company, to obey an urgent and imper-
ious call of nature.

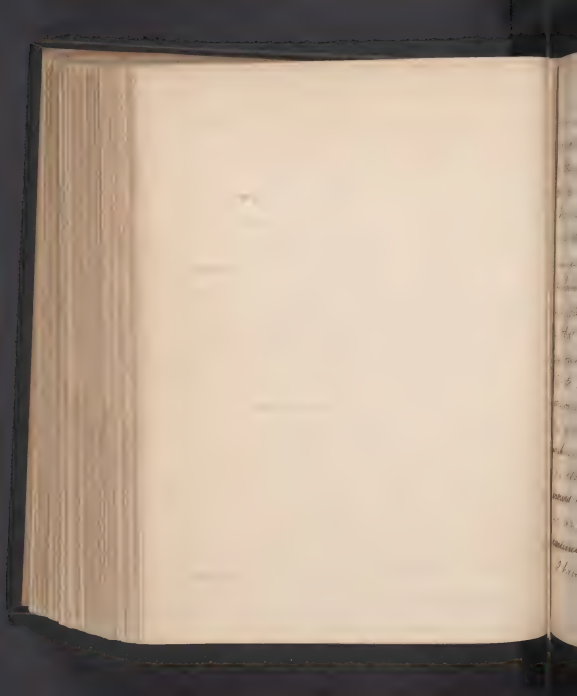
I have also experienced a similar effect, from
burning, as well as smoking. With me, being
of the sanguine, and extreme debility, sometimes
produces the disposition to stool. This action of
the tobacco on the stomach and rectum, must
also be referred to sympathy. It is peculiar to
herbals, to act in a different explanation.



So what I have already said in attempting to
move the habit of chewing, or smoking tobacco, or
injunctum much of dyspepsia, I will merely add
this fact: That the disease is very common
with pipe-chewers and smokers. This assertion
is not rest upon my own observation alone. It is
supported by the high authority of the present
Lecturer of the theory and practice of physic in the
University of Pennsylvania, whose enlarged ex-
perience, and habits of accurate observation entitle
him to speak with great authority. Says he "Both
chewing and smoking tobacco are frequent causes
of indigestion, and of these diseases the medi-
cines which have been applied to cure the
disease, from the unpleasant and often de-
structive symptoms of the disease, a large number
are either chewers or smokers of tobacco. For a
full and complete list of tobacco cases see
the present volume of the University of
Pennsylvania, and the University of Pennsylvania."



... to the appropriate nature who are slaves
... these ... as much a part, as if
... ^{must} ... as you continue their use, so long
... digestion organs remain impaired. This
... made poor memory is not in the pe-
... of the stomach, though ... ~~de~~ ...
... is fairly expected, and ... not will
... by enlightened practitioners generally.
Cardialgia or heart-burn also is a frequent consequence
the ... of tobacco. This affection is often accom-
panied by dyspepsia and is produced by the action
the acid on the stomach which is ~~usually~~ ...
... the acetic fermentation, a general conse-
quence of impaired digestion. The habit of chewing
... however, may produce this disease, more di-
rectly. A portion of tobacco is swallowed, which,
lying in the coats of the stomach, will produce that
very unpleasant and excruciating, distressing sym-
ptom called heart-burn. What it is, also



as it is to depress the power of the stomach
- a part of that system, with which it is necessary
they should be diluted, to prevent their ac-
tion on the coats of the stomach.

The nervous system also, is made to suffer
from the excesses of use of tobacco. This I know
from experience and observation. I was once in
the habit of chewing and smoking to great excess, &
have often had my nerves so much affected by, it,
that I could with difficulty write, intelligibly,
my own name, and have sometimes been unable
able to stand, in consequence of a general nervous
tremor, accompanied with extreme debility. Thus
we give room to be ascribed to the tobacco than
with me no doubt; for I could always distinctly
trace them to this cause, and to no other, always
found them to be increased by its continued
use, and generally experienced relief from its
continuing it.

I have also observed the nervous tremor, in a

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most common in persons who were extremely
temperate, except in the use of tobacco, and
which they indulged freely, as I ever wit-
nessed in the most confirmed drunkard.
I am intimately acquainted with an old gen-
tleman, who has been all his life an example
of temperance, in both eating and drinking, his
diet having been almost entirely confined to
milk, and he drank the pure and simple be-
verage of nature, having never since he was ten
years old tasted a drop of spirit of any
kind, not ever drink even cider. He was
not, however, an excessive chewer of tobacco, and
has long been a great slave to the pipe, in conse-
quence of which, his nerves are generally so much
affected that it is with the utmost difficulty he
can write a word intelligibly, and sometimes can
scarcely hold his pipe while smoking. He has
no other nervous symptoms, particularly violent sea-
sive headaches, to which he is very subject.



If necessary, I could adduce many similar examples (though perhaps not quite so strong) in support of the opinions I have advanced, but as it would be an unnecessary waste of time, this shall suffice for the present.

That there is nothing unreasonable, or inexplicable in this effect, is manifest from the general law of the animal economy, viz. That any strong, active, and unnatural stimulus, frequently applied, or long continued to any part of the nervous system, will eventually extend its baneful influence throughout that system, affecting it more or less, depending on the activity of the stimulus; the frequency or long continuance of its application; as also on the idiosyncrasies of the person to whom it is applied. Tobacco is a strong, active, and unnatural stimulus, which is, by chewers and smokers, frequently applied and long continued to a very sensible part of the nervous system. Consequently, when thus used, it may

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and no doubt often does produce a general dis-
arrangement of that system.

The nerves may suffer in another way, from
the excessive use of tobacco. The general and power-
ful sympathetic influence of the stomach on that
system, is now very generally, if not universal-
ly admitted. Whatever therefore sensibly affects
the former, has its influence on the latter. The per-
nicious effects of tobacco on the organs have been
shown above. Hence it follows, that when chewed
or smoked to excess, it affects the nervous system
sympathetically. The nerves therefore are af-
fected both directly and indirectly, by the habit of
chewing or smoking tobacco. This habit is a very
common one, consequently, it is a frequent
cause of nervous affections.

The habit of smoking is very injurious to the teeth.
Of this I think there can be no doubt. We have the
strongest evidences of the fact. Whether this effect
is to be ascribed to the heat, or to some peculiar



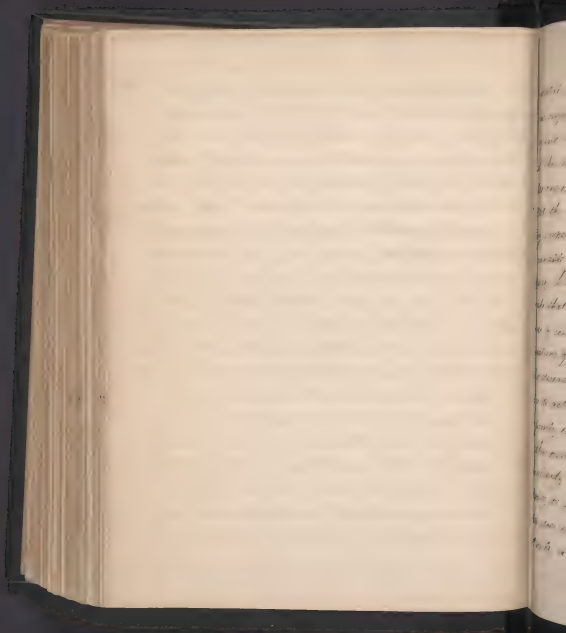
quality of the smoke of tobacco, I am not prepared to say, I think however, it may, with more propriety be ascribed to these two causes combined, than to either one alone.

Although the chewing of tobacco is generally, believed a preservation of the teeth, I am inclined to entertain the opinion exactly the reverse of this. The gums must often be inflamed, by the application of so active a stimulus as tobacco. And what seriously affects them, will, in my opinion, either directly, or indirectly, also affect the teeth. Besides, this is generally mixed with the manufactured tobacco (which is the kind most used), for the purpose of improving its appearance, certain articles which I think highly probable, are very injurious to the gums and teeth. I am however not fully prepared to depend this opinion, and will therefore let it rest for the present.

It is also supposed, that the excessive use of tobacco will impair the faculties of the mind. This



not prepared either to affirm or deny, from
my own observations. But that it may have
this effect I can very readily conceive, at least
there appears to me nothing unreasonable in the
supposition. That it does in some ways or other af-
fect the mind, there can be no doubt. Indeed, what
so visibly affects the body, must in my opinion
affect more or less, the mind. We also find intimate
sympathies, that it is impossible for
the one to receive an injury, and the other not par-
ticipate in it. That the health of the body, is neces-
sarily injured by the excessive use of tobacco, has been
already shown. We must therefore must show in
its injury. Again, all medicinal exercises & remedies
affect the mind. Now, whatever is capa-
ble of producing intoxication must act on the mind.
Tobacco produces both narcotic, and intoxicating
properties. All who have used it will doubtless give
their testimony in support of this assertion. have
often been altered by it from corporal and



mental suffering, and it has been heard per-
sonally of having been made, and to chew
and smoking tobacco. I have myself experienced
this unpleasant effect more than once, I have
experienced its narcotic effect. At these times
the mind by both its narcotic and intoxicat-
ing properties, and like opium and ardent spirits,
is capable of producing in it, at least a temporary
stupor. Like them also if long continued it may
make that injury permanent. For whatever has the
power of converting the natural or healthy actions or
equations of either the mind or body, into unnatural
or diseased ones, will by the same power, if it con-
tinues to act, so completely destroy the former, and
firmly establish the latter, as to render the injury
thus done irreparable. From this and what has
already said, it follows, that the habit of either
drinking or smoking tobacco may, and no doubt
it does inflict on the mind as well as body,
not only a temporary but permanent injury.

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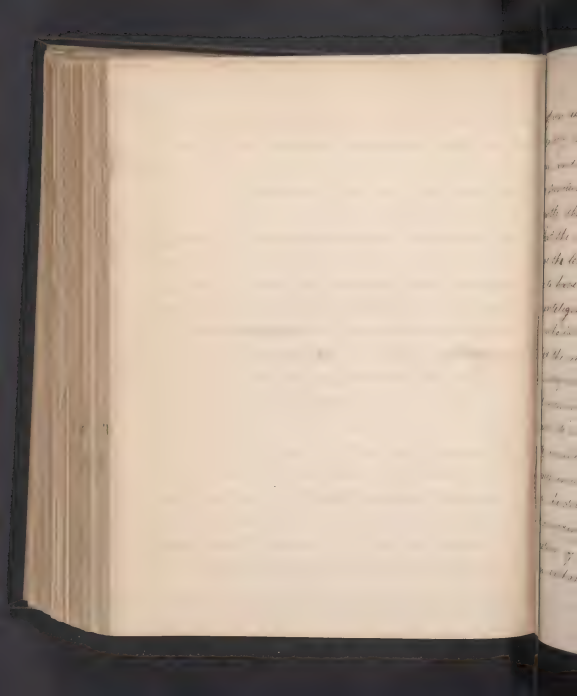
Interrogate him as to his health, and there will no doubt be discovered to you many other of the symptoms of depressed digestion. How does tobacco thus used produce this effect? It may produce it in several ways; 1st Much snuff is unavoidably swallowed, by all who indulge in its use. This needs no explanation; the passage from the nose to the stomach being a very direct one. It has been shown above that tobacco frequently taken into the stomach will impair its tone. Snuff is merely tobacco in powder. Consequently the habit of taking snuff impairs digestion by ~~indirect~~ direct action on the stomach.

The laws of sympathy may be here called to our aid. The powerful and sympathetic influence of the sense of smell and the Schneiderian membrane, over the stomach, brain &c. which has been so satisfactorily proved by the repeated and well conducted experiments of the ingenious and indefatigable Dr. Roussau of Philadelphia.

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phia, afford an easy and satisfactory, solution of
the problem before us. Snuff acting on the nose
make a strong impression on the Schneiderian mem-
brane and olfactory nerves, which impression is readily
communicated to the stomach, liver, and in stronger
cases, through the medium of sympathy, generally,
to this, and what has been previously said concerning
impressions on the stomach, this condition may be
shown, viz. That the habit of taking snuff when car-
ried to an extreme, may by its *immediateness* as well as
immediate action on the stomach impair its
tone, and thus produce dyspepsia. The nervous
system also, feels very sensibly, the effects of this
habit.

The mind, it is thought, does not escape the pre-
judicial influence of this indecent habit. This I think
not improbable, and will admit of an explanation sim-
ilar to that given, when treating of the effect of chewing
and smoking tobacco, on the mind. I think it may
also be explained in another way, viz. The strong im-



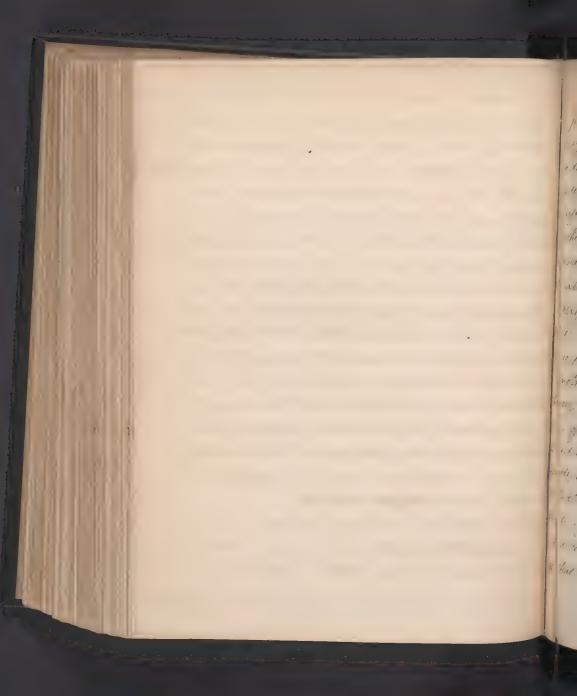
express which is made on the extremities of the
Starter nerves, is communicated directly to the
brain, and thus by the continuance of this habit, may
the functions of that organ be deranged, and conse-
quently, the mind impaired.

That the memory is weakened by this habit, we
have the testimony of its victims themselves. I remem-
ber to have seen somewhere on record, the case of
an intelligent man of an exceedingly retentive mem-
ory, who became an epileptic sufferer, after he had
passed the meridian of life. This person, he had
the satisfaction to find he never much improved,
and becoming daily less retentive. He was one of the
many to whom he said with the same degree of per-
sistence, as to the habit in which he had
indulged during the previous preceding
years, he determined to stand it immediately,
and accordingly did so. He was soon gratified by
the return of his former clear and retentive mem-
ory, in exchange for a troublesome and filthy habit.



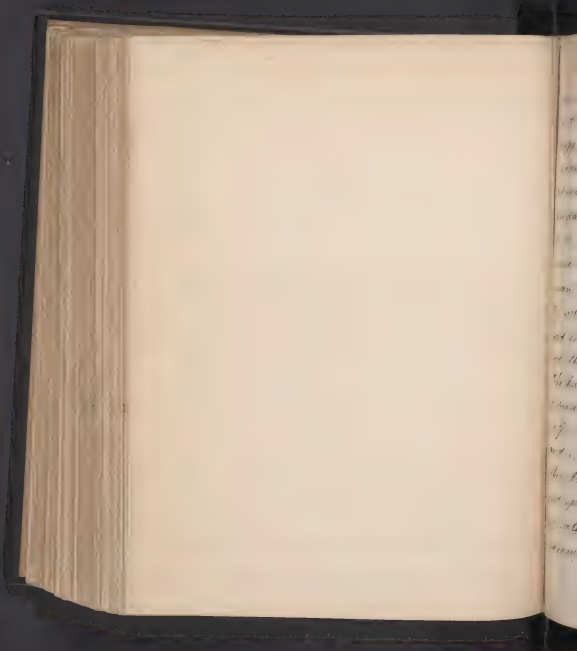
The case, as, clearly, and satisfactorily, proves that
the mind has been injured by taking snuff to excess.
And had it ~~not~~ been continued, we may reasonably
infer that the injury would have continued to increase,
until the memory would have been irretrievably lost.
Aware of the objection which may be here urged, do my
reasons or general inference, from a particular fact,
fully justify, I dare, that ~~this case~~ ~~illustrates~~, though
the strongest, is not the only one of the kind of which
I have heard. And when in addition to this, it is, and
how strong in the case quoted, and also that the
effect may be rationally explained, upon sound pa-
thological principles, I think I shall be warranted
in the conclusion, that the habit of snuffing, does
impair at least one of the faculties of the mind
(the memory) and that, we may reasonably infer,
it then does not ~~escape~~ ~~unhurt~~.

It also injures the voice very much. And I have
observed myself, and have frequently
heard it remarked by others. Now this effect



produced? I know not, unless it be, by the that
of the morphia being the more which
about one of the consequences of the frequent and
limited application of so active a stimulus as
opium, and is sufficient of itself to injure the voice.
Does tobacco in this form so injure the body
and mind, and the voice ought not this habit to be
abandoned?

May not some of the pulmonary affections, arise
as owe their origin to the excessive use of to-
bacco particularly when smoked or snuffed?
Another objection has been urged against the habit of
smoking, and smoking tobacco. What is it, and
is it duly sufficient to condemn it as im-
mediately and absolutely, and therefore ~~should~~ cause its
immediate and absolute abandonment. The doctor
said it often begets the habit of drinking ardent
spirits, by creating thirst, to quench which accustom
has to a mixture of spirit and water from a be-
lieve that it would be injurious, and even danger-



is a drunkard, as much as the latter, as the thirst
induced by the potent cordia demands. Strange, un-
happy, and lamentable a luxury that is surfeit, in-
sane, and wholesome a drink, as pure, as sweet, as
cold water, should be deemed unwholesome and so
dangerous, and ardent spirits should be taken
with caution, which view is one of the greatest
errors that was ever entertained, a foolish, and wicked
man. An error, as has been emphatically observed
to, which more persons than fall into by the way,
and is the cause of more distress and family dis-
cord than any one cause within my knowledge.

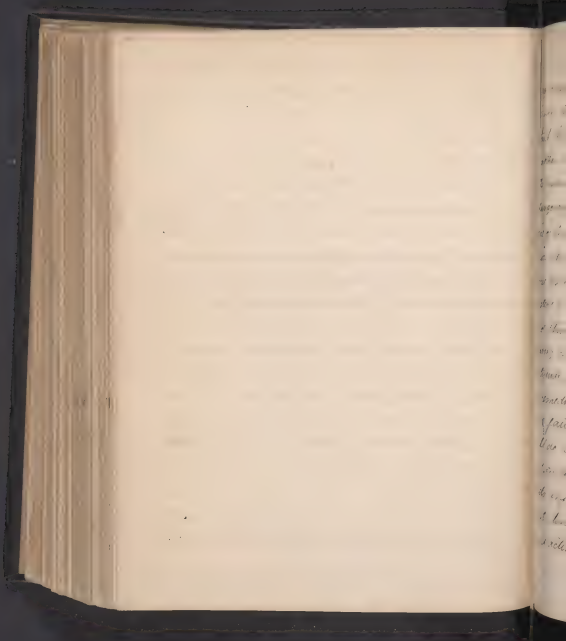
The habit of drinking ardent spirits to excess and an
intemperately they are now seldom drank and not to
excess which is, perhaps more easily formed
and is broken with more difficulty, than any
other. It is a habit too which with us, is increasing
and spreading at a wonderful and truly alarm-
ing rate, almost keeping pace with the rapid and
unexampled growth of our young and flourishing



long, and is an internal foe, worse which we
are more to fear, than from all our foreign
enemies combined.

When I look around, and observe with what rapid
it has spread within the few years it has in
the dominion, even whole families perished, and
in sight whom I behold men who but a few years
ago, condemned the habit in practice as well as precept,
are fallen a prey to its baneful influence, and become
confirmed addicts. Others, who, though not
so far advanced, are travelling with a long and rapid
ride, this direct road to ruin, and behold very few
willing to dispense with their dream or julep as
it were, at their proper tables of dinner. Others
are alarmed, and are ready to cry out Good Lord,
but me I save, from this hideous and frightful monster,
who seems to be bearing down, and crushing all
before him!

Whether this most destructive evil habit, is or
is a consequence of the vapours and rheum, or not,



may over power our dissensions will not prevent me
from saying, that it may, & sometimes it
does, but this is probable, and that it will extend to
another explanation beside that of the cause, the only
to be considered, it is not correct and is in-
dangerous to involve many false and positive
not of science. To use it before we are in these points
is to be in a contract the point of acting it then
is not as and yet who created a subject in mind,
without a cause, and to this it who would at
first there a most opposite and permanent idea.
Having contradicted the law, & having, even to
substantial means for doing a such case, the nature
of science is never applied. If then before should
be said to have the desired effect, which it often
does, either from the increased cause & effect,
or from the system having become too complicated
in its influence, which is the effect of an element
that long continued or frequently applied some
more active remedy is sought for which is seen



found in the bottle. Its contents are eagerly swallowed, and soon are his troubles lulled to sleep, in drunken forgetfulness. A sleep from which they awaken refreshed and invigorated, and again prey with relentless violence on their unhappy victim. Again does he fly for protection to the same disguised insidious enemy, that readily relieves as before, only to make more miserable. The same round is repeated again and again, until the habit of intoxication is established, and this once sober man is now a confirmed sot.

From observation we learn, that when once a man takes the bottle to drown his sorrows in, he may bid farewell to sobriety and morality, the ship is irretrievably lost, and must inevitably sink. Let us therefore beware of this shoal on which so many journey, and as the Immortal Rush advised "Write on every rebel containing ardent spirits," Touch not, Taste not, Handle not, Or as his able successor advises, "Let us unite with the moralist and divine, in dis-

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discouraging the consumption of these baneful articles,
if then it be our duty to discourage the habit of
drinking ardent spirits, and the ~~habit~~ use
of tobacco does in any way beget this habit,
which I have attempted to render highly probable,
is it not also our duty to discourage its use?

By the preceding dissertation I have ~~endeavored~~
to prove the habit of chewing, smoking, or snuffing
tobacco a frequent cause of disease. I have also at-
tempted to render it highly probable, that it
has an immoral effect. With what degree of suc-
cess my efforts have been attended, is not for me
to say. But of this I am well assured, that it
is a habit, which it would be more to the interest
of mankind to exterminate, than continue, and
is one which should meet with the decided dis-
approbation of men generally, and of
Physicians particularly.

George Morton

November 1822.

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